Decision document submitted by the

Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards

Mr Rehman Chishti MP

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Summary

The allegation I investigated was that the Member had failed to adequately declare a financial interest when writing to a public official as required by the Guide to the Rules relating to the Conduct of Members. This allegedly put the Member in breach of the requirements of Paragraph 14 of the Code of Conduct for Members of Parliament. I also investigated an allegation that the Member's letter to the public official was in support of that financial interest and not in support of the public interest. This allegedly put the Member in breach of the requirements of Paragraph 11 of the Code.

I upheld the allegations in part; concluding that whilst Paragraph 14 had been breached, Paragraph 11 had not.

I concluded that the interest in question met the test of relevance and the declaration that had been made in the letter to the public official was not adequate. This because the recipient of the letter would not have been aware of the nature of the interest without recourse to other publications. I considered it was possible that the recipient of the letter, had they been aware of the connection between the Member's interest and the content of the Member's letter, might reasonably have considered that the letter's content was influenced by the interest. For the same reasons, I also considered that the declaration should have included reference to a non-financial interest (a friendship) as that too was likely to have met the test of relevance. I decided that those omissions were breaches of the Guide and amounted to breaches of Paragraph 14 of the Code.

However, based on the information provided by the Member, I was satisfied that the content of the Member's letter to the public official was submitted after a consideration of the public interest and in pursuit of the public interest. I therefore found no breach of Paragraph 11 of the Code.

During my inquiry, the Member also informed me that his entry in the Register of Members' Financial Interests had become out of date as two expired interests had not been removed. I concluded that the Member's Register entry had not been updated in line with the requirements of the House and that this amounted to two further breaches of Paragraph 14 of the Code.

The Member accepted my decision, acknowledged his breaches of the Rules, and apologised for the breaches. The Member also undertook to ensure that his future written declarations are made in line with the requirements of the Guide and that his Register entry is updated in line with the requirements of the Guide. I considered the Member's apology and remedial actions to be an appropriate outcome, and I have concluded the matter by way of the rectification procedure available to me under Standing Order No. 150.

Resolution letter: Mr Rehman Chishti MP

I wrote to you on 17 May 2021 to tell you that I had begun an inquiry into your allegation that Mr Rehman Chishti MP had breached paragraphs 11 and 14 of the House of Commons' Code of Conduct for Members when writing to Medway Council in support of a local planning development.

Having investigated this matter, I found that Mr Chishti has breached the Code. I concluded that the declaration of interests in his letter of 18 February 2021 did not satisfy the requirements of paragraph 3 of the Chapter 2 of the Guide to the Rules, which states:

> *Declarations must be informative but succinct. A Member who has already registered an interest may refer to his or her Register entry. But such a reference is unlikely to suffice on its own, as the declaration must provide sufficient information to convey the nature of the interest without the listener or the reader having to have recourse to the Register or other publication.*

I considered that this amounts to a breach of paragraph 14. I therefore uphold this element of your complaint. I did not consider that Mr Chishti's letter of 14 January 2021 required the same declaration as that letter did not endorse or comment on the planning application.

It was also my conclusion that Mr Chishti provided satisfactory evidence to show that his support for this specific planning application was submitted after a consideration of the public interest and in pursuit of the public interest. I therefore found no breach of paragraph 11 and do not uphold this element of your complaint.

My full decision and rationale will be published on my webpage in due course, which will include the correspondence I exchanged with Mr Chishti.

Mr Chishti has accepted my decision. He has acknowledged his breaches of the rules, apologised, and undertaken to ensure that future written declarations to public officials will be made in line with the rules. I have therefore concluded the matter by way of the rectification procedure available to me under Standing Order No. 150. I will notify the Committee on Standards in due course of this outcome.

The matter is now closed.

25 June 2021

Written evidence

1. Letter from the complainant to the Commissioner, 19 April 2021

I am writing to ask that Rehman Chishti, Member of Parliament for the Rainham and Gillingham constituency, is investigated for breaking Parliamentary Standards.

On Wednesday 31 March 2021 planning application MC/20/3204 came in front of Medway Borough Council's Planning Committee. This was the third time that a planning application for this plot of land had been considered by the Planning Committee.

Prior to March 2021, the proposed developments on this site have twice been refused by the Planning Committee and on both occasions the Secretary of State has refused the applicant's subsequent appeal against the Council's decision to refuse permission.

The applicant [name redacted] (Director of MEMS Power Generation) is a Conservative Party member and a Conservative Party donor. Two members of the Planning Committee declared a conflict of interest as they belong to the same Conservative Party Association as the applicant, therefore leaving the debate and not voting on the application.

Although Mr Chishti also belongs to the same Conservative Party Association as the applicant, Mr Chishti still felt that it was appropriate to write a letter supporting the application, which was submitted on the Council's online planning portal and included in the Committee report provided to members of the Planning Committee.

This demonstrates that Mr Chishti has a clear conflict of interest in relation to this plot of land, its owner and the application which have been submitted to develop the land.

Furthermore, Mr Chishti has also accepted monetary donations from the applicant in 2015 and again in 2020, which can be found via the following links:

https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm/cmregmem/200111/chishti_rehman.htm
https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm/cmregmem/151214/chishti_rehman.htm

This unequivocal financial interest in supporting the planning application heightens the significance of the conflict of interest.

Mr Chishti's publicly stated support for the latest application cannot therefore be considered to be an impartial or an objective point of view. I strongly believe that Mr Chishti's inappropriate interference in the local planning process is a question of integrity, and his actions tarnish and undermine the very office to which he was elected.

Recognising the very clear trail of association and financial links to the planning applicant, it is difficult to conclude that Mr Chishti acted in the public interest. Indeed, residents who have objected to all three planning applications have previously asked Mr Chishti for his support in helping them fight against the planning applications. Mr Chishti informed the residents that it is not appropriate for him to get involved in small planning applications such as this. It would appear that Mr Chishti has failed to "resolve any conflict between the two, (personal interest and public interest) …. and in favour of the public interest"

I understand that the Rules of Conduct outlined in the House of Commons Code of Conduct 2019 not only applies to the conduct of Members of Parliament in the House of Commons, but in all aspects of their public life.

Therefore, whilst it is noted that Mr Chishti has declared the donations from the applicant in the Register of Members' Financial Interests in accordance with Paragraph 14 of the Code of Conduct, I would like his actions to be investigated against the other Rules of Conduct, most notably:

> *11. Members shall base their conduct on a consideration of the public interest, avoid conflict between personal interest and the public interest and resolve any conflict between the two, at once, and in favour of the public interest.*

> *17. Members shall never undertake any action which would cause significant damage to the reputation and integrity of the House of Commons as a whole, or of its Members generally.*

Additionally, I feel that Mr Chishti has also failed to observe many of the General Principles of Conduct identified by the Committee on Standards in Public Life, most notably:

> *Selflessness*
>
> *Holders of public office should take decisions solely in terms of the public interest. They should not do so in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends.*
>
> *Integrity*
>
> *Holders of public office should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might influence them in the performance of their official duties.*
>
> *Objectivity*

In carrying out public business, including making public appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits, holders of public office should make choices on merit.

Enclosure 1: Email from a local resident to Mr Chishti, 7 January 2021

I hope you are well. I am contacting you on behalf of the residents of 1st Avenue, 2nd Avenue, Glebe Road and the Mews. We are all devastated to hear the news that a local developer has put forward a new application (MC/20/3204 | Construction of four 3-bedroom and three 4-bedroom houses) to develop a cul-de-sac on the Tennis courts at the back of our gardens (Avenue Tennis Club Glebe Road Gillingham Medway ME7 2HU).

The tennis courts have a 100 year old heritage and are extremely important to the local community. Not only is it part of the ambience of the area, it also plays a significant role in the health and mental wellbeing for our youth. The visual amenity of the area, as well as the surrounding wildlife will be destroyed, which has upset many residents.

The main reason for contacting you is to ask for your support in objecting to the proposals which we view as harmful backland development. They are clearly in breach of the NPPF policy in regard to garden grabbing, especially on plots 5, 6 & 7. On 9th June 2010 (and subsequently the NPPF Policy 2019) the Government implemented a policy to prevent the overdevelopment of neighbourhoods and 'garden grabbing'. The Government Planning Policy Statement 3: Housing (PPS3) is to exclude residential gardens from the definition of 'previously developed land', also referred to as 'brownfield' land. As a community we wanted to ask you if you were in favour of garden grabbing and if you will support us as a local councillor and an MP to object to this development.

We very much look forward to your reply.

Enclosure 2: Response from Mr Chishti's office to the local resident, 20 January 2021

Thank you for your email to Rehman Chishti MP regarding MC/20/3240. I am responding as Rehman's Senior Caseworker.

Planning applications are a quasi-judicial matter which are assessed by local planning authorities, in our case Medway Council, and not by MPs.

Rehman has therefore written to the Head of Planning at Medway Council and has passed to him the correspondence he has received including your own with personal details redacted, asking that it is provided to the planning officers who will make a decision on this matter.

Thank you again for your email, I hope that this is useful to you.

Enclosure 3: Email from Mr Chishti to the Head of Planning at Medway Council submitting representations received from local residents concerning planning application MC/20/3204, 15 January 2021

I am writing to you in reference to the application presently before the planning authority seeking permission to construct 3 four-bedroom houses and 4 three-bedroom houses and associated works at Glebe Road in Gillingham.

I have received the attached representations from local residents in reference to this application. I would be grateful if they can be placed before planning officers when making a decision.

With regard to representations from [name redacted] who is my constituent I draw attention to my declaration of interest in the House of Commons Register of Member's Financial Interests.

Enclosure 4: Email from Mr Chishti to the Head of Planning at Medway Council submitting own position on planning application MC/20/3204, 18 February 2021

I am writing to you in reference to the application for 3 four-bedroom houses and 4 three-bedroom houses and associated works at Glebe Road in Gillingham presently before the planning authority.

I previously wrote to you on 15th January regarding this application in order to provide you with correspondence that I had received from constituents.

On Tuesday, 16th February I gave evidence at the planning inquiry against the 1,250 homes Pump Lane development which I am firmly against. At that inquiry I was repeatedly asked by lawyers for the applicants about Medway Council's track record in building houses, the lack of a plan, the local authority not having a five-year land supply and my position on housebuilding in the local area.

I made it clear that I do support housebuilding which should be looked at on a case-by-case basis whilst we move towards having a full housing plan for the area.

It is with this background on balance that I support this application as there is a real shortage of houses in the local area and taking into account the Local Authority has not built the number of houses that it needs to build in line with Government projections.

It is absolutely vital that we look at addressing the housing shortage in the area on a case-by-case basis to meet our local need until we have a full local plan to avoid large-scale developments such as Pump Lane being pushed forward by developers.

The application that is before the Local Authority in this case in my view is of the appropriate size, character and is supported by an appropriate number of parking spaces.

I note that this revised application now addresses a number of concerns that were previously raised in a prior application.

Declaration of Interest

With regard to the application [name redacted] is my constituent. I draw attention to my declaration of interest in the House of Commons Register of Member's Financial Interests.

19 April 2021

2. Letter from the Commissioner to Mr Rehman Chishti MP, 17 May 2021

Following receipt of an allegation I have received from [the complainant] about your compliance with the House of Commons Code of Conduct for Members, I have decided to open a formal inquiry. I enclose a copy of [the complainant's] complaint and the supporting evidence submitted with it.

The scope of my inquiry

My inquiry will focus on whether you have acted in breach of paragraphs 11 and 14 of the House of Commons' Code of Conduct for Members by way of your support for a planning application made by Jarvis Residential (Medway) Ltd to Medway Council (planning application MC/20/3204). I will consider whether your letters to the planning committee adequately declared your interest in the application and also met the requirements laid down in the Guide to the rules relating to the conduct of Members. I will also consider if your support for the planning application gave rise to a conflict between any personal interests and the public interest and, if so, whether you resolved that conflict in favour of the public interest.

If the scope of my inquiry changes, I will update you in writing.

The relevant rules of the House

The overarching rules are found in the House of Commons' Code of Conduct for Members (enclosed). Paragraph 11 of the Code states:

> *Members shall base their conduct on a consideration of the public interest, avoid conflict between personal interest and the public interest and resolve any conflict between the two, at once, and in favour of the public interest*

Paragraph 14 of the Code states:

> *Members shall fulfil conscientiously the requirements of the House in respect of the registration of interests in the Register of Members' Financial Interests. They shall always be open and frank in drawing attention to any relevant interest in any proceeding of the House or its Committees, and in any communications with Ministers, Members, public officials or public office holders*

The Guide to the rules relating to the conduct of Members, which is appended to the Code, contains more detail about the declaration of interests. Chapter 2, paragraph 3 states:

> *Declarations must be informative but succinct. A Member who has already registered an interest may refer to his or her Register entry. But such a reference is unlikely to suffice on its own, as the declaration must provide sufficient information to convey the nature of the interest without the listener or the reader having to have recourse to the Register or other publication.*

Next steps

I would welcome your comments on the allegation that your alleged actions have amounted to a breach of paragraph of either paragraph 11 or 14 of the Code of Conduct for Members. I would also be grateful for your answers to the following specific questions:

1. In your submissions of 15 January 2021 and 18 February 2021 to [name redacted], Head of Planning at Medway Council, you drew his attention to your entry in the Register of Members' Financial Interests.

    a) What specific interest did you wish Mr Harris and the planning committee to take note of?

    b) Why did you consider that interest to be relevant to the committee's consideration of this application?

2. In light of your answer to question 1, and in light of the extract from the Guide, above, do you still consider your declarations of 15 January 2021 and 18 February 2021 to be sufficient? If so, I would be grateful if you could please explain why.

3. I note that your submission of 15 January 2021 to the planning committee includes several objections from local residents about the application made by Jarvis Residential (Medway) Ltd. I also note that the committee's final report states 51 objections were lodged, albeit some were from the same household,

and that only 3 letters of support were received. In light of the views of local residents, please can you outline why you opted to support this planning application?

4. Did anyone ask you to write your letter of support of 18 February 2021? If so, who?

5. In light of your answers to questions 1 and 3, did you consider that your support for this planning application might give rise to a conflict between a private interest and the public interest? If so, how did you weigh and resolve that conflict in favour of supporting the application?

6. On 7 January 2021, a local resident contacted you asking for your support in opposing the planning application (page 4 of the accompanying bundle). A member of your staff replied to that local resident on 20 January 2021 (page 6 of the bundle) stating:

> *"Planning applications are a quasi-judicial matter which are assessed by local planning authorities, in our case Medway Council, and not by MPs. Rehman has therefore written to the Head of Planning at Medway Council and has passed to him the correspondence he has received including your own with personal details redacted, asking that it is provided to the planning officers who will make a decision on this matter."*

Please can you outline why you didn't inform the resident that you intended to support the application?

It would be helpful to receive any evidence to support your responses when you reply to this letter. Any other points you wish to make to help me with this inquiry would also be welcome.

Important information

My inquiries are conducted in private. However, following the decision taken by the House on 21 April 2021, I will shortly publish on my webpages the fact that I am conducting an inquiry about your alleged breach of the Code of Conduct. If contacted, my office will not comment on any aspect of this specific inquiry to third parties. They will answer direct factual questions about the processes I follow, and the standards system more generally, but will not provide any comment or details about the particulars of this inquiry.

This letter and any subsequent correspondence between us in connection with this inquiry is protected by parliamentary privilege. It should be kept confidential until the outcome of my inquiry is published. The same requirement extends to [the complainant].

Procedure

I enclose a copy of the Commissioner's Information Note, which sets out the procedure for inquiries. Please note that this has not yet been updated to reflect the changes flowing from the decision of 21 April 2021.

While I do not, at this stage, know whether it will be necessary to interview you about this matter, it would be open to you to be accompanied at any such interview. I am, of course, very happy to meet with you at any stage if you would find that helpful.

I should say now, as a matter of courtesy, that I may seek the advice of the House authorities and others as part of this inquiry. If I do so, I will share that correspondence with you.

Information provided to me during the course of my inquiry will be retained, and disposed of, in accordance with the House of Commons' Authorised Records Disposal Policy.

Potential outcomes

Inquiries are generally concluded in one of three ways. If the evidence does not substantiate the allegation, it will not be upheld. If the evidence demonstrates a breach of the rules, I may, in circumstances defined by Standing Order No. 150, uphold the allegation and conclude the inquiry using the rectification procedure, without making a referral to the Committee on Standards. Where an allegation is not upheld or is rectified, the investigation material, including our correspondence, will be published on the Parliament website.

If I uphold the allegation, and it is either unsuitable for the rectification procedure, or you do not accept my decision, I must make a referral to the Committee on Standards. My memorandum to the Committee will be published as an appendix to the Committee's own Report.

Regardless of the outcome of my inquiry, I must emphasise that all the relevant evidence, including our correspondence, will be published when this inquiry is concluded. I routinely redact the personal data of third parties unless it is relevant to my decision(s). Please tell me if you provide sensitive material that you think I should redact. I will consider carefully any such request.

Action

I would be grateful to have your response to this letter as soon as possible and no later than **28 May 2021** please.

If you would prefer me to communicate with you by a different email address, please give the details when you reply to this letter. It would also be helpful if you were willing to provide a telephone number through which I might contact you.

Due to the current working arrangements on the parliamentary estate, my team are working from home only, so I would be grateful if you could send your response electronically to; standardscommissioner@parliament.uk.

Thank you for your cooperation with this matter.

Enclosure 1: Complainant's letter of 19 April 2021 and attachments (as per item 1 above)

Enclosure 2: Medway Council decision notice on MC/20/3204, 6 April 2021 (accessed via Medway Council's website)

Not reproduced here

Enclosure 3: Submission from a planning officer to the planning committee of Medway Council on MC/20/3204, undated (accessed via Medway Council's website)

Not reproduced here

Enclosure 4: Mr Chishti's entry in the Register of Members' Financial Interests, 18 January 2021

1. Employment and earnings

On 11 September 2020, commissioned into the British Army as a Reservist. Payments will be received from the Army Pay Office, 65 Brown St, Glasgow G2 8EX. (Registered 09 December 2020)

14 January 2021, received payment of £1,124.20 from Al Muwatta Center FZ LLC / Forum for Promoting Peace, Ground Floor, Twofour54 Building No. 2, Ministries Complex, Abu Dhabi, UAE, P.O.Box 77847, for speaking on a virtual international panel at the 7th Assembly of the Forum for Promoting Peace in Muslim Societies on 8 December 2020. Hours: 6 hrs (participation and preparation). (Registered 18 January 2021)

2. (a) Support linked to an MP but received by a local party organisation or indirectly via a central party organisation

Name of donor: Beams International Ltd

Address of donor: 4A Bloors Lane, Rainham, Gillingham ME8 7EG Amount of donation or nature and value if donation in kind: £2,000 Donor status: company, registration 3737151

(Registered 09 January 2020)

Name of donor: MEMS Power Generation

Address of donor: Beechings Way, Gillingham ME8 6PS

Amount of donation or nature and value if donation in kind: £2,000 Donor status: company, registration 2028435

(Registered 09 January 2020)

4. Visits outside the UK

Name of donor: Embassy of Bahrain, London

Address of donor: 30 Belgrave Square, London SW1X 8QB

Estimate of the probable value (or amount of any donation): Flights and accommodation, total value £4,000

Destination of visit: Manama, Bahrain Dates of visit: 23-31 December 2020

Purpose of visit: On parliamentary business with regards to freedom of religion or belief, including meeting with the Bahrain Foreign Minister, Deputy Foreign Minister, faith leaders and organisations and visits to places of worship.

(Registered 18 January 2021)

8. Miscellaneous

Councillor, Rainham Central Medway Council. Since my election to Parliament I draw no allowances.

Non-practising barrister.

From 12 September 2019, the Prime Minister's Special Envoy on Freedom of Religion or Beliefs. This is an unpaid role. (Registered 03 October 2019)

9. Family members employed and paid from parliamentary expenses

I employ my sister, Nusrat Ahmed, as Office Manager.

17 May 2021

3. Letter from Mr Rehman Chishti MP to the Commissioner, 25 May 2021

Further to your letter dated 17th May 2021, regarding the opening of a formal inquiry following a complaint from Medway Labour councillor Chrissy Stamp, please find my answers to your questions attached to this letter.

I have also provided an executive summary of my responses to provide context to my actions in this matter.

Please don't hesitate to contact me if you require any further information

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

I state at the very outset that I do not have any financial interests in Jarvis Residential (Medway) Ltd. Secondly, the declaration which I referred to in the letter dated 18th February to Medway Council in support of this application was the declaration in the Register of Members Financial Interests under 2.(a) from MEMS Power Generation. MEMS Power Generation in Gillingham have previously donated to the Gillingham & Rainham Conservative Association. MEMS Power Generation is owned by the same family, the Jarvis family, who own Jarvis Residential (Medway) Ltd. Apart from this declaration, I have no financial interests with either of these two entities.

All representations that I have made in this matter have been made through appropriate procedure and are entirely in the public interest. To provide some context, it has become clear that Medway has a significant issue with housing supply. The Medway unitary authority must build 28,300 additional homes across Medway by 2037 and Medway Council has yet to deliver a new Local Plan outlining where and how it intends to deliver these houses.

On 16th February 2021, I appeared before a Planning Inspectorate Inquiry into an unsustainable application for up to 1,250 homes at Pump Lane in my constituency, which I and hundreds of constituents vigorously oppose. At this inquiry I was consistently questioned by the applicant's lawyer about housing delivery and my support for developments across Medway to meet this need. It became apparent to me that in order to avoid having unsustainable large-scale developments without appropriate infrastructure being imposed on our local area and damaging our valued green spaces, I needed to review my position and proactively support small-scale developments where appropriate until a new Local Plan has been developed. In the past, I had never up until 18th February 2021, to my recollection commented in support of small-scale developments and had generally left the issue to the local authority to consider.

In my evidence below, I draw attention to the opening statement of Medway Council's lawyer, Robert Williams, at the Planning Inquiry on 16th February 2021, whose exact words were "that there is a significant need for housing in Medway is not in dispute". Please see the link to the inquiry session here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2X28GSL9i7Y

I also draw attention to the appellant's Statement of Case covering the Pump Lane planning inquiry, with regards to the significant need for housing in Medway, which states that "the Proposed Development is promoted in the context of an obvious and chronic housing shortage in Medway. The housing situation in Medway is critical and requires urgent redress through the delivery of sustainable development and locations" (see page 20 of 'Appellants Statement', a screenshot of which is attached. The full document can be found on this link.[1]

It is within this context, which I provide further detail on below, that I supported the development application in question. In addition, I note that the responsible Medway Council planning case officer recommended to the Medway Council Planning Committee that the application be approved.

As a Member of Parliament for eleven years, I have always been and continue to be committed to transparency, openness and working in the interest of my constituents and my actions in this matter reflect that. After giving evidence at the inquiry on 16th February, and my change in approach on these matters, I have made similar representations supporting small-scale developments on a case-by-case basis across the constituency and I approached this decision as I have approached all other decisions with regards to small-scale developments in the constituency.

1. In your submissions of 15 January 2021 and 18 February 2021 to [name redacted], Head of Planning at Medway Council, you drew his attention to your entry in the Register of Members' Financial Interests.

a) What specific interest did you wish Mr Harris and the planning committee to take note of?

b) Why did you consider that interest to be relevant to the committee's consideration of this application?

a.) The specific interest I wished Mr Harris and the planning committee to take note of was listed under 2.(a) of my Register of Members' Financial Interests, a donation from MEMS Power Generation to the Gillingham & Rainham Conservative Association, which was registered in January 2020.

b.) In my commitment to utmost transparency, I highlighted this interest as although the applicant of the MC/20/3204 (Jarvis Residential Medway Ltd.)

[1] See planning application MC/19/1566 on medway.gov.uk

and MEMS Power Generation are separate entities, they are owned by the same family (the Jarvis family).

Although this financial declaration is outside of the twelve-month period in which Members should normally declare any financial interests, as covered under 4.a. of the House of Commons 'Guide to the Rules relating to the Conduct of Members', in the interest of utmost transparency I made the declaration.

2. In light of your answer to question 1, and in light of the extract from the Guide, above, do you still consider your declarations of 15 January 2021 and 18 February 2021 to be sufficient? If so, I would be grateful if you could please explain why.

As per my commitment to openness and frankness, at that time I felt I had made the appropriate succinct declaration. This also took into account the length of time that had passed since the donation was registered, which was over the twelve month period in which Members should normally declare any financial interests, as outlined in Chapter 2, Paragraph 4.a. (page 31) of the House of Commons 'Guide to the Rules relating to the Conduct of Members'. Additionally, the application in question was made by Jarvis Residential (Medway) Ltd, not MEMS Power Generation. I have had no financial link with Jarvis Residential (Medway) Ltd.

In hindsight, having re-read Chapter 2, Paragraph 3 (page 31) of 'The Guide to the Rules relating to the Conduct of Members', I recognise that I should have added a further line in my declaration to clarify the point that although this was an application by Jarvis Residential (Medway) Ltd., to which I have no financial link, a separate business entity, MEMS Power Generation owned by the Jarvis family, had previously supported the local Gillingham & Rainham Conservative Association through a donation, as per 2.(a) of my Register of Member's Financial Interests.

If I had been asked for further details by the local authority, I would of course have been happy to provide it.

In any event, having relooked at Chapter 2, Paragraph 3, as stated above, I should have made the declaration clearer in my representations on this matter, taking into account my answers to question 1.

3. I note that your submission of 15 January 2021 to the planning committee includes several objections from local residents about the application made by Jarvis Residential (Medway) Ltd. I also note that the committee's final report states 51 objections were lodged, albeit some were from the same household, and that only 3 letters of support were received. In light of the views of local residents, please can you outline why you opted to support this planning application?

On Tuesday, 16th February 2021, I appeared before a Planning Inspectorate inquiry to give evidence opposing the proposed development for up to 1,250 homes at Pump Lane (MC/19/1566). At the inquiry, the lawyer for the appellant consistently questioned me on housing provision in the local area, the lack of a new local authority Local Plan, issues regarding land supply and he specifically asked me if I had commented previously on small scale developments of less than 50 units in the area. The inference from the lawyer at the hearing was that I don't support any housing across the board.

Therefore, with regards to small-scale developments, my position on this changed from previously forwarding representations to the Council to proactively supporting small-scale developments on a case-by-case basis across the constituency. In the past, I had never up until 18th February 2021, to my recollection commented in support of small-scale developments and had generally left the issue to the local authority to consider.

This was a significant policy change for me, but the point had become clear during the hostile questioning at the inquiry that small-scale developments need to be accepted to avoid unsustainable large-scale developments being imposed on the local area without appropriate infrastructure, as Medway local authority does not have a new local plan or a five-year housing land supply to meet its needs and the Government's targets of 28,300 houses by 2037.

From my inquiry appearance onwards, my position was to specifically look at all applications going before the local authority on a case-by-case basis. Where I deemed them appropriate and to be in the best interests of the local area, I would formally and proactively comment on such proposals, and support them where appropriate, with the need to satisfy the demand for housing in mind.

Prior to the inquiry on 16th February, I had not on general principle, since becoming an MP in 2010, proactively commented in support of small-scale applications and forwarded on representations to the local authority asking that they take residents' view into account when considering the proposal.

In supporting evidence of my change in opinion on the matter of supporting small-scale developments, please see the link[2] to the opening statement of Medway Council's lawyer, Robert Williams, who covers the issue of the significant need for housing in Medway, when he stated "That there is a significant need for housing in Medway is not in dispute."

I also draw attention to the appellant's Statement of Case covering the Pump Lane planning inquiry, with regards to the significant need for housing in Medway, which states that "the Proposed Development is promoted in the context of an obvious and chronic housing shortage in Medway. The housing

[2] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2X28GSL9i7Y

situation in Medway is critical and requires urgent redress through the delivery of sustainable development and locations" (see page 20 of 'Appellants Statement', a screenshot of which is attached. The full document can be found on this link).[3]

Please also see the comments (screenshot attached) made by the leader of the Labour group on Medway Council, whose fellow Labour colleague has lodged this complaint against me, regarding the unsatisfactory position that Medway Council finds itself in with regards to building the appropriate level of housing, describing that "We absolutely have a housing crisis; we need to build houses in Medway and across Kent that should be at a level rate; we have thousands on the waiting list, so we can't say we will never build a house again." The link to the full article can be found here: https://www.kentonline.co.uk/medway/news/this-housing-shake-up-is-utter-madness-247769/

The application in question by Jarvis Residential (Medway) Ltd happened to be one of the first applications that arose after my Inquiry appearance. As an MP, I have no say in the timings of applications and have not at any point had contact with the local authority, councillors, or officials on this matter. The only representations I have made have been through appropriate procedure and included what I felt at the time was the appropriate declaration.

It is also important to note that this application was a revised version of a previous application on the same site. I made clear in my correspondence with [name redacted] on 18th February that I believed the revised application addressed a number of the concerns that were previously raised in the prior application. It should also be noted that this application has gone before the local authority on two different occasions and I had not commented on the matter, in line with my previous policy of not generally commenting on small-scale developments.

Furthermore, I note that the responsible Medway Council case officer, who is strictly independent, in their Officer Report (a copy of which I have attached) on the development recommended to the Planning Committee that the application be approved:

"It is considered that the revised scheme has satisfactorily addressed the area of concern raised by the previous Inspector, while providing for a well designed scheme which protects the amenities of existing and prospective residents and is acceptable against all planning consideration matters."

With regards to the decisions of Medway councillors on the Planning Committee after this, that is of course a matter for them.

[3] See planning application MC/19/1566 on medway.gov.uk

As a result of my change in views, since February 2021, I have commented in favour of six small-scale planning applications in Gillingham & Rainham that have come before Medway Council. I have attached a document for your reference which outlines all the applications that I have supported since February 2021.

I am committed to ensuring that Medway has an appropriate level of adequate and sustainable housing and until Medway Council has delivered a new Local Plan, I will continue to comment on small scale developments on a case-by-case basis, as I did with application MC/20/3204 and as I have done with five further developments.

With regards to the representations that I have received from constituents, I have checked my parliamentary email address from 21st December 2020, when the application will have gone live to the time of my representations to the 18th February 2021, when the application closed for comments. In that time, I received seven emails on the matter. As an MP, you must make representations and decisions based on the information you have before you and the circumstances at the time. It was made very clear by the appellants of MC/19/1566 (the Pump Lane development) at the Planning Inquiry about the serious lack of housing delivery and not having a new Local Plan from Medway Council, and as an MP, from 16th February I felt it was appropriate to comment on small-scale developments on a case-by-case basis until the new Local Plan is developed by Medway Council.

I am very happy to share the representations from constituents that I have received in that period. It should be noted that some of those representations were personal remarks and criticisms of the applicant for MC/20/3204 rather than substantial criticisms of the application.

4. Did anyone ask you to write your letter of support of 18 February 2021? If so, who?

No

5. In light of your answers to questions 1 and 3, did you consider that your support for this planning application might give rise to a conflict between a private interest and the public interest? If so, how did you weigh and resolve that conflict in favour of supporting the application?

No, I do not have a private interest in this planning application.

With regards to my decision, it was purely in the public interest by trying to ensure that we are building an appropriate number of houses in the local area and the urgent need to look at supporting small-scale developments on a case-by-case basis.

In supporting evidence of my change in opinion on the matter of supporting small-scale developments, I draw attention to the previously mentioned opening statement of Medway Council's lawyer at the Planning Inquiry into the Pump Lane planning application, when he stated "That there is a significant need for housing in Medway is not in dispute."

I also draw attention to the appellant's Statement of Case covering the Pump Lane planning inquiry, with regards to the significant need for housing in Medway, which states that "the Proposed Development is promoted in the context of an obvious and chronic housing shortage in Medway. The housing situation in Medway is critical and requires urgent redress through the delivery of sustainable development and locations" (see page 20 of 'Appellants Statement', a screenshot of which is attached. The full document can be found on this link).[4]

These statements make it very clear that there is a significant concern over the lack of housing supply and delivery in Medway.

At the time, I supported this development on this basis just like I have supported other applications since appearing at the inquiry. This proposed development was recommended for approval by the independent Medway Council planning case officer. Regardless of whether it is this applicant or anyone else, if it is the right development for the area and in line with the public interest in building sufficient numbers of houses, I will support small-scale developments on a case-by-case basis. It is clear that Medway is currently in an unsatisfactory position with regards to housing provision and we must support small-scale developments while the local authority develops its new Local Plan.

6. On 7 January 2021, a local resident contacted you asking for your support in opposing the planning application (page 4 of the accompanying bundle). A member of your staff replied to that local resident on 20 January 2021 (page 6 of the bundle) stating:

> **"Planning applications are a quasi-judicial matter which are assessed by local planning authorities, in our case Medway Council, and not by MPs. Rehman has therefore written to the Head of Planning at Medway Council and has passed to him the correspondence he has received including your own with personal details redacted, asking that it is provided to the planning officers who will make a decision on this matter."**

Please can you outline why you didn't inform the resident that you intended to support the application?

[4] See planning application MC/19/1566 on medway.gov.uk

As referenced in my answers to question 3, at that specific time on 20th January 2021, I was of the view that I would pass all representations I received on small-scale developments such as this one on to the local authority, in the same way as I had done for the previous eleven years that I had served as the Member of Parliament. I have never to my recollection commented in support of small-scale developments and have generally left the issue to the local authority to consider.

However, on 16th February 2021, I gave evidence to a Planning Inquiry for the first time as an MP and I was repeatedly aggressively questioned on what steps I had proactively taken to support small-scale developments. Following on from this, I made the decision that I would review and support local small-scale developments to meet our local housing need until the local authority had produced a new Local Plan, in order to avoid large unsustainable developments being imposed on our green spaces without the appropriate infrastructure.

My position therefore only changed after 16th February, hence why I wrote the supporting letter on 18th February. I have always been open and transparent in my responses to constituents and that is why I simply passed on their concerns on 20th January, as per my answers above.

Further to this, you can view my appearance before the Planning Inspectorate inquiry on the following YouTube link.[5] The transcript of the evidence at the Inquiry I understand is not available yet.

Enclosures

a) Rehman Chishti MP letter of support for application MC/20/3204 (18th February 2021)

See enclosure 4 of the complainant's letter of 19 April 2021 (item 1 in this pack)

b) Screenshot of page 20 of Statement of Case of appellants' legal representative for the Planning Inquiry into MC/19/1566, describing the unsatisfactory position of housing delivery in Medway

Not reproduced here but available on medway.gov.uk

c) Screenshot of relevant part of Kent Online article, regarding Medway Labour leader comments on housing (24th May 2021)

[5] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2X28GSL9i7Y

Not reproduced here but available via https://www.kentonline.co.uk/medway/news/this-housing-shake-up-is-utter-madness-247769/

d) List of planning application supported by Rehman Chishti MP since February 2021

MC/20/3204 | Construction of four 3-bedroom and three 4-bedroom houses with associated parking, access road and open landscape area | Avenue Tennis Club Glebe Road Gillingham Medway ME7 2HU

18th February: Rehman Chishti MP supports the application

MC/21/0112 | Formation of a 75 space car park for the Kingdom Hall. | Kingdom Hall 94 Bloors Lane Rainham Gillingham Medway ME8 7DS

5th March: Rehman Chishti MP supports the application

MC/21/0579 | Construction of a 3 storey student accommodation block comprising of 9 units totalling 11 student bedrooms with shared amenities on the ground and first floor | Former Adult Education Centre (Including Number 46) Block C Green Street Gillingham Kent ME7 5TJ

26th March: Rehman Chishti MP supports the application

MC/21/0580 | Outline application with some matters reserved (appearance, landscaping, layout and scale) for the redevelopment of vacant land formerly part of MoD barracks to provide 12 apartments with new access from Medway Road, ancillary parking and open space | Land Between Medway Road And Cumberland Road Gillingham Medway ME7 1NH

31st March: Rehman Chishti MP conditionally supports the application

MC/21/0674 | Demolition of existing garage and associated buildings and structures and construction of a 68-bed care home (use class C2) with associated car parking, landscaping and access to Hoath Lane | 26-28 Hoath Lane Rainham Gillingham Medway ME8 0SW

7th May: Rehman Chishti MP supports the application

MC/21/1004 | Construction of 20No. residential dwellings and the creation of a new access from Pier Road. Provision of associated car parking, hardstanding, landscaping, open spaces and ecology area, infrastructure including drainage and earthworks including tree clearance and the

formalisation of parking area at Layfield Road. | Land West of Layfield Road Gillingham Medway ME7 2QY

7th May: Rehman Chishti MP conditionally supports the application

e) Rehman Chishti MP – Register of Members' Financial Interests (as at 18th January 2021)

See enclosure 4 of the Commissioner's letter of 17 May 2021 (item 2 in this pack)

f) Medway Council officer report into MC/20/3204

Not reproduced here but available on medway.gov.uk

25 May 2021

4. Letter from the Commissioner to Mr Rehman Chishti MP, 7 June 2021

Thank you for your detailed letter of 25 May 2021.

I believe that I almost have sufficient information to bring my inquiry to close, however, it would be helpful if I could put two further questions to you please:

1. Did you discuss the planning application (MC/20/3204) with anyone from Jarvis Residential Ltd or MEMS Power Generation? If so, who and when, and what was the nature of the discussion?

2. Do you have a personal friendship with [name redacted] or any of the other directors at Jarvis Residential Ltd? If so, please could you describe in general terms the nature of that friendship?

If possible, please could you send your reply to me by 16 June 2021?

In the meantime, our correspondence remains protected by parliamentary privilege and I must ask that you continue to maintain the strict confidentiality of the inquiry.

As you know, due to the current pandemic, my team are currently working from home only, so I would be grateful if you could please send your response electronically to standardscommissioner@parliament.uk

7 June 2021

5. Letter from Mr Rehman Chishti MP to the Commissioner, 14 June 2021

Thank you for the update in your letter of 7th June 2021 with regards to the inquiry you are carrying out on this matter.

Please find below the answers to your two additional questions:

Question 1: Did you discuss the planning application (MC/20/3204) with anyone from Jarvis Residential Ltd or MEMS Power Generation? If so, who and when, and what was the nature of the discussion?

No.

Question 2: Do you have a personal friendship with [name redacted] or any other Directors at Jarvis Residential Ltd? If so, please could you describe in general terms the nature of that friendship?

Yes, the personal friendship I have is with [name redacted], who I play tennis with. Prior to Covid 19, I attended social events in the constituency, where [name redacted] was also present and on occasion, we attended local sporting events. I do know other directors of Jarvis Residential Ltd as it is a family business, but I do not have a personal friendship with them. [name redacted] is also a member of the Gillingham and Rainham Conservative Association.

Please don't hesitate to contact me if you require any further information.

14 June 2021

6. Letter from the Commissioner to Mr Rehman Chishti, 22 June 2021

Thank you for your detailed letter of 25 May 2021 and your further letter of 14 June 2021 addressing my two follow-up questions. I am grateful for the promptness of your replies.

Having considered the available evidence carefully, I now have sufficient information to make a decision on the allegations that I have been investigating.

You will recall that my inquiry was opened to consider whether you acted in breach of paragraphs 11 and 14 of the House of Commons' Code of Conduct for Members ("the Code") by way of your support for a planning application made by Jarvis Residential (Medway) Ltd to Medway Council (planning application MC/20/3204).

I have considered if your support for the planning application was based on a consideration of the public interest, whether your support gave rise to a conflict

between any personal interests and the public interest and, if so, whether you resolved that conflict in favour of the public interest. I have also considered whether your letters of 15 January and 18 February 2021 to the planning committee adequately declared your interest in the application and met the requirements laid down in the Guide to the rules relating to the conduct of Members ("the Guide").

Due to the information that you shared with me on 25 May 2021 about your entry in the Register of Members' Financial Interests ("the Register"), I have also considered whether you have registered your interests in line with the requirements of the House, which are contained in the Guide.

1. My decision

I have considered our correspondence, the available evidence, the published rules, and accompanying guidance.

I have decided that you had a relevant interest in the planning application made by Jarvis Residential Ltd and that you were right to attempt to draw the planning committee's attention to that interest. However, I do not consider that there is any evidence to suggest that you had a direct private interest in the success of the planning application or that your support was due to a wider private interest. Based on the information available, I am satisfied that your support for the application was submitted in line with a consideration of the public interest and in pursuit of the public interest. It is therefore my view that no breach of paragraph 11 occurred.

However, I have decided that the declaration of your interest, made in your letter of 18 February 2021 to the Head of Planning at Medway Council, did not satisfy the requirements outlined in the Guide and that this amounts to a breach of paragraph 14 of the Code.

I have also decided that the failure to update your entry in the Register, by removing your roles as a local councillor and the Prime Minister's Special Envoy, within the time limit set by the House, amounts to two further breaches of paragraph 14 of the Code.

2. Rationale

a. Declaration of interest

On 18 February 2021 you sent a letter of support to the Head of Planning at Medway Council supporting a planning application (MC/20/3204) submitted by Jarvis Residential Ltd. This was the third application made by Jarvis Residential Ltd for the development of the same site. In your letter of support, you drew the Head of Planning's attention to your entry in the Register, stating:

> *With regard to the application [name redacted] is my constituent. I draw attention to my declaration of interest in the House of Commons Register of Member's Financial Interests.*

One of the Directors of Jarvis Residential Ltd is [name redacted]. Previously, on 9 January 2020, you had accepted and correctly registered in the Register a donation from MEMS Power Generation. [name redacted] is also a Director at MEMS Power Generation. I agree that as you had previously received a donation from MEMS Power Generation, a company connected to Jarvis Residential Ltd by shared owners, the test of relevance outlined in paragraph 5 of Chapter 2 of the Guide was likely to have been met and therefore a declaration was needed. You were therefore right to have made your declaration. However, having made your declaration, you needed to ensure that the declaration complied with paragraph 3 of the Chapter 2 of the Guide, which states:

> *Declarations must be informative but succinct. A Member who has already registered an interest may refer to his or her Register entry. But such a reference is unlikely to suffice on its own, as the declaration must provide sufficient information to convey the nature of the interest without the listener or the reader having to have recourse to the Register or other publication.*

As you have accepted, the connection between MEMS Power Generation and Jarvis Residential Ltd is not immediately obvious without further research at Companies House and therefore your declaration was not sufficient and did not adequately convey the nature of your interest.

You have also told me that you have a personal friendship with [name redacted]. In my view, it would have also been appropriate to declare this friendship in line with the final clause of paragraph 4 of Chapter 2 of the Guide:

> *Members may also declare, if they think it appropriate, non-financial interests which are not registered but which they consider meet the test of relevance.*

I think is probable that the planning committee may have considered a friendship with a Director of Jarvis Residential Ltd to have been an interest reasonably capable of influencing your support for the application. They should have been made aware of this information.

For these reasons, it is my decision that your declaration of 18 February 2021 was not in line with the requirements of the Guide, and I am satisfied that this amounts to a breach of paragraph 14 of the Code.

I am not satisfied that a similar full declaration was needed when you wrote to the Head of Planning on 14 January 2021 as at that time you were merely forwarding on correspondence from constituents without expressing any opinion on the merits

of the application or the submissions from your constituents. Accordingly, I am satisfied that a declaration was not needed, and a breach of paragraph 14 did not occur.

b. Conflict of interests

On 7 January 2021, a local resident contacted you requesting your support in opposing the planning application that was being put forward by Jarvis Residential Ltd. On 20 January 2021, your office replied stating:

> *Planning applications are a quasi-judicial matter which are assessed by local planning authorities, in our case Medway Council, and not by MPs. Rehman has therefore written to the Head of Planning at Medway Council and has passed to him the correspondence he has received including your own with personal details redacted, asking that it is provided to the planning officers who will make a decision on this matter*

My reading of your response is that your position at that time was neutral, and you were not minded to become involved in the council's assessment of the planning application. As I have noted above, on 18 February 2021 your position changed, and you submitted your letter of support to the Head of Planning at Medway Council. You have told me that between 20 January and 18 February 2021 your position changed because of your experience at an inquiry into a larger proposed development at Pump Lane. That experience led you to change your policy in respect of small-scale developments and as a result you decided that you would support such applications on a case-by-case basis. You told me that you decided to change your policy:

> *…to avoid unsustainable large-scale developments being imposed on the local area without appropriate infrastructure, as Medway local authority does not have a new local plan or a five-year housing land supply to meet its needs and the Government's targets of 28,300 houses by 2037.*

You also told me that your criteria for supporting such applications would be:

> *Where I deemed them appropriate and to be in the best interests of the local area, I would formally and proactively comment on such proposals, and support them where appropriate, with the need to satisfy the demand for housing in mind.*

I have noted that the content of your letter of 18 February 2021 reflects those policy criteria.

You have also told me that it was a coincidence that the first application affected by this change in your policy was the one from Jarvis Residential Ltd. You have also provided me with a list of further applications that you have subsequently supported. You have also told me that you did not support the two earlier applications made by Jarvis Residential Ltd for the development of the Glebe Road site. I have checked those two earlier applications and agree that for those applications you only forwarded the representations you had received from constituents, which is consistent with your initial approach to MC/20/3204 when writing to the Head of Planning at Medway Council on 15 January 2021.

You have also highlighted to me comments made by several other parties, including the Leader of Medway Council, about housing issues in the Medway area, which you say were brought into focus at the Pump Lane inquiry. You have told me that your support for Jarvis Residential Ltd's application was in response to those housing issues and you have also highlighted that the independent planning officer also supported this planning application.

You have told me that you did not discuss the planning application with anyone from Jarvis Residential Ltd and you have also reassured me that no-one asked you to write your letter of support. I have also noted that you have not registered any donations made directly by Jarvis Residential Ltd either before or after your letter of support. However, I do note the earlier financial support you received from MEMS Power Generation, a company linked to Jarvis Residential Ltd by shared owners, and your personal friendship with [name redacted], a Director at both firms.

I am mindful that the public interest is not always narrowly defined and that acting in the public interest on large issues, such as Housing, can bring a Member into conflict with the interests of some, or many, of their constituents.

Taking into account all of this information, I am satisfied that your support for Jarvis Residential Ltd's planning application was made after a consideration of the public interest and was objectively in line the public interest. I am also satisfied that there is no information available to support the suggestion that your support for the application was due to a private interest. Accordingly, I do not find a breach of paragraph 11 of the Code.

c. Registration of interests

I am grateful to you for highlighting that your entry in the Register has become out-of-date as you have failed to remove two expired interests:

- Your role as a local councillor for Rainham Central on Medway Council, which ended on 8 May 2019

- Your role as the Prime Minister's Special Envoy for Freedom of Religion or Belief which ended on 14 September 2020

As you know, paragraph 14 of the Code requires Members to conscientiously fulfil the requirements of the House when making and updating entries in the Register. Paragraph 2 of Chapter 1 of the Guide outlines the time limit set by the House for changes to the Register:

> *…(A)fter that, Members are required to register within 28 days any change in those registrable interests. Such a change includes both the acquisition of a new interest and the ceasing of any registered interest, for example because an employment has ceased or because a holding has reduced in value or been sold.*

Both of these interests have remained on the Register well after the 28-day time limit, which is not in line with the requirements of the Guide and I am therefore satisfied that this amounts to two further breaches of paragraph 14 of the Code.

Next Steps

Standing Order No. 150 makes provision for me to conclude an inquiry without making a referral to the Committee on Standards in certain circumstances. The Committee would generally expect the Member to have acknowledged and apologised for their breach of the rules, and to have taken any steps necessary to rectify their breach.

I have decided that a referral to the Standards Committee is not necessary and that I can resolve this breach of the rules through rectification. To do so, please can you:

a) Carefully review my decision and confirm in writing that you accept it;

b) Include with your response a written acknowledgement that you have breached the rules and apology for those breaches;

c) Include with your response an undertaking that future written declarations will be made in line with the requirements of the Guide and that your Register entry will be updated in line with the requirements of the Guide; and

d) Contact the Registrar of Members' Financial Interests, [name redacted], to have the two expired interests removed from the Register.

If you are content for me to conclude the inquiry in this way, please can you complete the steps above by 6 July 2021.

If you agree to my proposal, I will share my written evidence pack with you, so that you can check its factual accuracy before publication. I will also report the outcome to the Committee on Standards in due course as a matter of routine. Alternatively, you are also entitled to not accept my decision, in which case I will pass this matter to the Committee on Standards for their adjudication.

In the meantime, our correspondence remains protected by parliamentary privilege and I must ask that you continue to maintain the strict confidentiality of the inquiry.

As you know, due to the current pandemic, my team are currently working from home only, so I would be grateful if you could please send your response electronically to standardscommissioner@parliament.uk.

22 June 2021

7. Letter from Mr Rehman Chishti MP to the Commissioner, 22 June 2021

Thank you for your letter of 22nd June 2021, informing me that you have now concluded your inquiry and of the decision that you have taken in this matter, including that you have dismissed the conflict of interest complaint and the House of Commons Code of Conduct has not been breached with regards to Paragraph 11 of the Code, but with regards to the adequacy of the declaration point, there has been a breach under Paragraph 14 of the Code.

1. At the outset, I have fully reviewed your decision and accept it. With regards to the declaration I made in the letter of 18th February 2021 to the Head of Medway Council Planning, although I made a declaration in that letter, it should have been clearer and having re-reviewed the Code I accept that it was not in line with the requirements of the House of Commons Guide to the Code of Conduct and amounted to a breach of Paragraph 14 of the Code.

   I am grateful to you for rectifying the separate matter of the two entries (my previous roles as a Medway Councillor for Rainham Central and as the UK Prime Minister's Special Envoy for Freedom of Religion or Belief) in the Register of Interests which I brought to your attention as they were not updated within 28 days, which amounted to a breach of Paragraph 14 of the Code.

2. I acknowledge and apologise for the breaches outlined above.

3. I write to confirm that in the future, declarations will be made in line with requirements in the Guide and that the Register of Members' Interests will be updated in line with requirements in the Guide.

4. I have contacted the Registrar of Members' Financial Interests, [name redacted], today to have the two expired entries removed from the register.

I look forward to receiving the written pack from you, with regards to checking its factual accuracy. Please note that I have sent an email to your office today, correcting one point in your letter, which referenced the Leader of Medway Council, when in fact my evidence made reference to the Leader of the Labour Group on Medway Council. A minor clarification with regards to my previous role as a Councillor on Medway Council: that ended on the 7th May 2019, and not the 8th May 2019.

22 June 2021